

NQMC RFP Questions and Answers

Question 1: Section B, Items 1003 Case Reviews, 1003AA, 1003AB, 1003AC, page 2: The total volume for these types of case review is 165 for costing purposes. The historical volumes given in Attachment L-2 total 120 cases for the same items. Please explain the difference in total number of cases.

Response 1: Section B represents the number of cases that the Government will use for evaluation purposes in determining the offeror's proposed price. Section L-2 is historical data, provided to give the offerors a breakdown of cases by case type. The Government did not intend for these numbers to be identical.

Question 2: Section C-6.4, page 15: In reference to the 1,400 cases sent to the NQMC monthly, if Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF) cases are to be included in the 1,400 cases, in what format will the SNF data be sent to the NQMC? Will the NQMC receive the Minimum Data Set data related to the SNF cases selected in addition to any HCSR data?

Response 2: The SNF medical record will be provided, along with the typical HCSR data. If MDS is required, the MCSC or DP will have to request that this data be provided in addition to the medical record and HCSR data.

Question 3: Section C-6.4, page 15: "On a monthly basis, TMA shall select approximately 1400 cases for review." As the sampling strategy changes and becomes more focused (See Attachment L-6 for the historical sample breakdown) the physician referral rates may vary by focused sample. Would the TMA please supply the historical physician referral rates by sample type, such as Med/Surg, Mother/Baby, Mental Health, etc?

Response 3: TMA does not track physician referral rates, and therefore cannot supply this information.

Question 4: Section C-6.4.1, page 15: "...the NQMC shall use InterQual and ASAM criteria to provide consistent and standardized reviews..." Currently, InterQual does not have criteria for RTC for children; this will not be available until March 2004. What should the NQMC use for criteria until that time?

Response 4: Until such time as the InterQual RTC criteria are available, the NQMC should use the RTC criteria specified in 32 CFR 199.4.

Question 5: Section C-6.4.8, page 15: What would be considered a SNF case? Would it be just the timeframe where there is only one RUG assigned, or could the timeframe be over a longer period where there would be more than one RUG assigned? Would the NQMC then verify all the RUGs?

Response 5: An SNF case will include only one RUG.

Question 6: Section C-6.4.8, page 15: The draft RFP stated that the NQMC will verify the SNF three-day qualifying stay and 30-day discharge from the acute care facility. This is not stated in the final RFP. Will the NQMC perform this review?

Response 6: No, the NQMC will not be required to validate these qualifying 3-day stay or the 30-day discharge.

Question 7: Section C-6.4.8, page 15: Will the NQMC review swing bed stays, as well as SNFs?

Response 7: Swing bed stays are not currently identified on the Health Care Service Record. Therefore, the SNF case selections will include those cases where the provider is identified as a Skilled Nursing Facility.

Question 8: Section H-4.3, page 29 and Section L-16.1, page 64: Does TMA want to see the Conflict of Interest statement of agreement contained in the cover letter to the Technical Proposal, or included with the Cost Proposal?

Response 8: In an upcoming amendment we will clarify that the Conflict of Interest statement required in Section L-16 will be provided on the subcontracting plan CD-ROM, along with a hard copy containing an original signature.

Question 9: Section L-11.4, page 52: This section states, “The government reserves the right to incorporate into the awarded contract those elements of an offeror’s proposal that exceed the government’s minimum requirements or offer a unique approach to meeting those requirements. *These elements must be specifically identified as enhancements by the offer in their written proposal.*” (*italics ours*)

Second, Section L-13.4.1.1 on page 55 states, “Offerors will specifically *identify on the slides (italics ours)* any proposed enhancements to include any standards that will exceed the stated government standards.”

Third, Section L-13.4.7 states that “Any proposed enhancements must be submitted *in writing.*”

Fourth, Section L.13.7.1.1 on page 58 states, “The written technical proposal is limited to the oral presentation slides; plans for compliance with...; and proposed enhanced standards (if any).”

Please clarify if the government wants proposed enhanced standards as a separately tabbed document in the Written Proposal, or if such enhanced standards are only to be incorporated and highlighted in the oral presentation slides in the approach discussion. If they are to be a separately tabbed document in the written proposal, please clarify if the government wants the proposed enhanced standards as a separate CD.

Response 9: Any proposed enhancement must be in writing and identified as an enhancement, consistent with Section L-11.4. If the offeror states an enhancement during the oral presentation,

and the enhancement is not documented in writing on the presentation slide, the offeror's verbal enhancement will not be considered. Further, as stated in Section L-11.4, the Government reserves the right to incorporate into the awarded contract those elements of an offeror's proposal that exceed the Government's minimum requirements or offer a unique approach to meeting those requirements; but the Government is not required to incorporate these proposed enhancements. As a result, it is possible that a proposed enhancement that an offeror considers a strength to its proposal may not be viewed by the Government to provide any benefit, and may not be incorporated. For the oral presentation portions of the offeror's proposal, the proposed enhancement must be in writing on the slide, consistent with the instructions in Section L-13.4.1.1. The offeror must also provide a separate list of the proposed enhancements with its technical proposal (on the CD-ROM). As for providing a separate CD for proposed enhancements, the required CDs are specified in Section L-12.6, and include the price proposal, technical proposal, past performance information, financial information, and subcontracting plan. An additional CD is not desired. This will be clarified in an amendment to the RFP.

Question 10: Section L.12.3, page 52: "Offerors will submit their anticipated organization structure fifteen calendar days prior to the submission of proposals (see Past Performance section below.)." However, the Past Performance section, Section L-13.9, does not reference organization structure. Please clarify if the government wants the offeror to include the organization structure with the past performance document. If it does, is the organization structure included in the 25-page limit? If not, does the government want the organization structure to be separately tabbed and/or a separate CD?

Response 10: Section L-12.3 specified that the offeror will submit its organizational structure 15 calendar days prior to submission of the proposal as part of the Past Performance submission. The reference to the Past Performance section (L-13.9) is where the Government is notifying the offerors that Past Performance submissions are required 15 calendar days prior to the proposal due date. The organizational structure will not count as part of the 25 page limit and should not be provided as a separate CD, which is clarified in Amendment 1 to the RFP; see Attachment L-7 provided with Amendment 1.

Question 11: Section L-12.5, page 52: The RFP states that oral presentation slides are to be compatible with Microsoft Office XP applications. Is it correctly assumed that the Microsoft Power Point application will be used for presentation slides?

Response 11: As stated in Section L-13.4.3, prior to the oral presentation, the Government will load the offeror's CD containing the presentation slides onto a computer; this computer will have Microsoft Office XP installed on it. It is directed that the offerors will use Microsoft PowerPoint to present their oral presentation. This will be specified in an upcoming amendment to the RFP.

Question 12: Section L.12.6, page 53: "A separate CD is required for each of the price proposal, technical proposal, past performance information, financial information, and subcontracting plan."

Also, Section L.13.7.1.1 on page 58 states, “The written technical proposal is limited to the oral presentation slides; plans for compliance with records management, privacy, and security requirements...; and proposed enhanced standards (if any).”

Third, Section L.13.8.1 on page 58 is delineated as an evaluation item (“Written Proposal Topics: Factor 1, Management, Subfactor 1, Privacy and Security.”)

Given the specific notations in the above sections of Privacy and Security (which are separated from other technical discussions and are a separate evaluation subfactor), plus the extensive requirements of this in Section C-6.3, does the government desire the Privacy and Security discussion to be provided as a separate CD, or is this to be folded into the technical proposal CD?

Response 12: This requirement will be removed by an amendment to the RFP; the Privacy and Security subfactor will not be evaluated.

Question 13: Section L-12.8, page 53: The RFP states that “Past Performance will be evaluated utilizing written information submitted by the offeror and information obtained from other sources in accordance with M-9.” However, Section M-9 is “Evaluation of Technical Approach.” Section M-10 is “Evaluation of Past Performance.” Should the Section L reference here refer to M-10, instead of M-9?

Response 13: Yes, Section M-10 is the proper citation and will be corrected in an amendment.

Question 14: Section L-12.16.1, page 54: “It is anticipated that a separate information certification and security conference will be conducted in conjunction with the preproposal conference.” Further, the announcement for the preproposal conference posted on the Web site on April 16, 2003 did not specify that the information certification and security conference would be included in its agenda. When (date and time) will the information certification and security conference be held, and where?

Response 14: The information certification and security conference will occur at the Pre-Proposal Conference on May 8, 2003. This conference is being held at the Radisson Hotel Denver Southeast, beginning at 8:00 AM local time.

Question 15: Section L-13.2, page 54 and L-15, page 63: Are Small Business Subcontracting plans required for first-tier subcontractors?

Response 15: No, subcontracting plans are only required for prime contractors that are not designated as small businesses.

Question 16: Section L-13.2, page 54: “A proposed subcontracting plan will be submitted with the proposal.” In which document should this plan be included, the Technical Proposal or the Price Proposal?

Response 16: Section L.12.6 states that a separate CD is required for each of the price proposal, technical proposal, past performance information, financial information, and subcontracting plan.

Question 17: Section L-13.4.5, page 55: “Prior to the start of the oral proposal presentation...the facility where the oral proposal will be held will be identified to each offeror.” Will offerors have access to the facility prior to the scheduled presentation time for visual inspection and potential practice sessions?

Response 17: Consistent with Section L-13.4.11, the presentation room will be opened to the offerors one hour prior to the scheduled presentation.

Question 18: Section L-13.7.1.3, page 58: “Offerors shall submit with their written proposal a copy of all visual materials to be used in the oral presentation.” By “visual materials,” does the Government mean the slides for the oral presentation, or can visual materials be expanded to include additional handouts to be provided at the oral presentation? Are the latter allowed? If so, how many additional handouts are allowed?

Response 18: The language in this section will be removed in an amendment. No handouts will be allowed as part of the oral presentation.

Question 19: Section L-13.9.1, page 59: “The offeror will submit a letter from all of its proposed first-tier subcontractors giving the government permission to discuss negative past performance....” Is this letter included in the 25-page limit of the Narrative Past Performance Report?

Response 19: No.

Question 20: Section L-13.9.2, page 59: “The Narrative Past Performance Report (with 1-inch margins and Courier New font no smaller than 10 point)....” May the offeror provide graphics such as charts, tables and headings in a font other than Courier New for enhanced readability and comprehensibility, so long as it also is no smaller than 10 point?

Response 20: No.

Question 21: Section L-13.9.2, page 59: “The Narrative Past Performance Report (with 1-inch margins and Courier New font no smaller than 10 point)....” Must the offeror use this font throughout all written material (resumes, oral presentation slides, privacy/security text, etc.) or does this only apply to the Narrative Past Performance Report?

Response 21: This only applies to the Narrative Past Performance Report.

Question 22: Section L-13.9.2.5, page 60: Since Attachment L-3 is not included in the 25-page limit, is Attachment L-4 referenced here not included in the 25-page limit? Or is it to be included in the 25-page limit?

If it is not included in the 25-page limit, is the related discussion of the work for that reference (brief discussion of work performed, notable successes, problems developed, offeror's response) also not included in the page limit?

Response 22: Attachment L-4 will not be included in the 25-page limit; however, the brief discussion of work performed, notable successes, problems developed, offeror's response, will be included in the 25-page limit.

Question 23: Section L-13.9.2.6, page 60: "Experience information will not be included in the Narrative Past Performance Report 25-page limit." Is Attachment L-5 included in the 25-page limit?

Response 23: Attachment L-5 will not be included in the 25-page limit.

Question 24: Section L-13.9.2.6, page 60: "Experience information will not be included in the Narrative Past Performance Report 25-page limit." Please clarify what "experience information" means. Is this information that the offeror provides in addition to Attachment L-5 and the resume? If so, please clarify that this information is not included in the 25-page limit.

Response 24: We are planning to issue an amendment that revises this language to specify that the experience information provided as Attachment L-5 will not be included in the 25-page limit.

Question 25: Section L-13.9.2.7, page 60: "The offeror will provide copies of final reports and/or findings..." Such final reports are often multiple pages. Are these reports and/or findings, and related explanations (any deficiencies reported in the evaluation and resolution of findings) included in the 25-page limit of the Narrative Past Performance Report?

Response 25: No. those reports are not included in the 25 page Narrative Report.

Question 26: Section L-13.9.2.8, page 60: "To facilitate this relevancy determination, include a "roadmap" describing all such changed in the organization of your company." Is this roadmap included in the 25-page limit of the Narrative Past Performance Report?

Response 26: Yes, the roadmap is included in the 25-page limit.

Question 27: Section L-13.9.2.8, page 60: Is the "roadmap" referenced above the same as the submission of the organization structure referenced in Section L-12.3, page 52?

Response 27: No. We have added clarifying language in an amendment. A road map is a tool to track organizational changes, such as ownership changes, name changes, mergers, reorganizations etc.

Question 28: Reference RFP Section C-6.4.9, page 15; This citation discusses the timeliness requirements of reviews from the time the information is received from the MCSC/DP. We do not see any instructions in section L or M as to where the Government desires this requirement to

be addressed. Does the Government desire this requirement to be addressed in the Technical written proposal or in the Technical oral presentation?

Reference RFP Section C-6.4.10, page 16; This citation discusses the requirements of Data Dictionary, HCSR, and TED fields. We do not see any instructions in section L or M as to where the Government desires this requirement to be addressed. Does the Government desire this requirement to be addressed in the Technical written proposal or in the Technical oral presentation?

Reference RFP Section C-6.4.11, page 16; This citation discusses the timeliness and sufficiency of analysis of utilization concerns, quality concerns, and coding irregularities, report potential fraud and abuse, inappropriate medical care, preventable admissions, and care that is not a TRICARE benefit, as well as the timeliness of the MCSC in responding to findings from the NQMC. We do not see any instructions in section L or M as to where the Government desires this requirement to be addressed. Does the Government desire this requirement to be addressed in the Technical written proposal or in the Technical oral presentation?

Reference RFP Section C-6.4.12, page 16; This citation discusses the tracing of MCSC and DP performance on submitting selected records and responding to issues as required in the OPM and TOM. We do not see any instructions in section L or M as to where the Government desires this requirement to be addressed. Does the Government desire this requirement to be addressed in the Technical written proposal or in the Technical oral presentation?

Reference RFP Section C-6.4.13, page 16; This citation discusses the NQMC's analysis of the new MCSC/DP annual reporting requirements and its role in assisting the Government in determining best practices. We do not see any instructions in section L or M as to where the Government desires this requirement to be addressed. Does the Government desire this requirement to be addressed in the Technical written proposal or in the Technical oral presentation?

Reference RFP Section C-6.4.14, page 16; This citation discusses the NQMC analysis of information among the Health Service Regions to assess "best value health care", identification of superior quality health care transfer, decreasing various items that would increase program costs, and developing recommendations for focused studies and quality improvement projects. We do not see any instructions in section L or M as to where the Government desires this requirement to be addressed. Does the Government desire this requirement to be addressed in the Technical written proposal or in the Technical oral presentation?

Reference RFP Section C-6. 5, Focused Studies, page 16; This citation sets forth requirements for Focused Studies as directed by TMA. We do not see any instructions in section L or M as to where the Government desires this requirement to be addressed. Does the Government desire this requirement to be addressed in the Technical written proposal or in the Technical oral presentation?

Reference RFP Section C-6. 6, External Reviews of Malpractice Cases, page 16; This citation and its sub-items sets forth requirements for External Reviews of Malpractice Cases. We do not

see any instructions in section L or M as to where the Government desires this requirement to be addressed. Does the Government desire this requirement to be addressed in the Technical written proposal or in the Technical oral presentation?

Reference RFP Section C-6.7, Medical Necessity (Reconsideration) Reviews, page 17; This citation sets forth requirements for Medical Necessity Reviews. We do not see any instructions in section L or M as to where the Government desires this requirement to be addressed. Does the Government desire this requirement to be addressed in the Technical written proposal or in the Technical oral presentation?

Reference RFP Section C-6.7.1, Standards, page 17; This citation and its sub-items set forth requirements standards for Medical Necessity Reviews. We do not see any instructions in section L or M as to where the Government desires this requirement to be addressed. Does the Government desire this requirement to be addressed in the Technical written proposal or in the Technical oral presentation?

Reference RFP Section C-6.8, Internal/External Case Reviews, page 17; This citation sets forth requirements for Internal/External Case Reviews. We do not see any instructions in section L or M as to where the Government desires this requirement to be addressed. Does the Government desire this requirement to be addressed in the Technical written proposal or in the Technical oral presentation?

Reference RFP Section C-6.10 Evolving Practices, Devices, Medicines, Treatments, and Procedures, page 18; This citation sets forth requirements for review of MCSC recommendations as directed by TMA. We do not see any instructions in section L or M as to where the Government desires this requirement to be addressed. Does the Government desire this requirement to be addressed in the Technical written proposal or in the Technical oral presentation?

Reference RFP Section, C-6.11, Contract Transition In and Phase Out, page 18; this citation and its sub-items sets forth requirements for both Transition In and Phase Out. We do not see any instructions in section L or M as to where the Government desires this requirement to be addressed. Does the Government desire this requirement to be addressed in the Technical written proposal or in the Technical oral presentation?

In reference to all of the above questions, we note that several of these topical areas are also covered in Section C-6.4. We also note that in questions/answers to other recent procurements it has been the Government's intent that all Section C elements are requirements that the offeror is obligating itself to by virtue of proposal submission, and that the Government has indicated no desire to have those items addressed, nor would those items be considered in evaluation. Is that the case with the above referenced items? Please clarify.

Response 28: The commenter is correct that it is the Government's intention that the successful offeror will be responsible for all of the Section C requirements. The Government has determined, however, that it will not evaluate all requirements of Section C, and is only requiring that offerors submit, for evaluation purposes, information on those areas specified in Sections L

and M. Consequently, while the contractor will be required to perform to the Statement of Work (Section C), the proposals should be prepared consistent with the instructions specified in Section L. The proposals will be evaluated consistent with Section M.

It must be recognized that some areas are indeed being assessed by the Government at a higher level than indicated by the commenter's questions. For example, Section C-6.4.9, cited by the commenter, indicates the timeliness standards that will be imposed on the contractor; the offeror's integration of its Internal Quality Management Program, in order to ensure accuracy and timeliness, will be reviewed consistent with Section M-8.1.4.2 (see also L-13.6.3.2).

Similarly, this commenter cites Section C-6.4.11 as another requirement for timeliness and sufficiency of analysis that is not required to be addressed in an offer. Again, Section C-6.4.11 describes the analysis that the NQMC shall be required to provide and the timeliness standards that shall be imposed. The commenter should recognize that Section M-8.1.2.2 indicates that the Government will evaluate the offeror's processes and plans for preparing required reports, to include final determination on responses from MCSCs and DPs, as required in Section C-6.4.11 (see also L-13.6.1.2). Further, the commenter cites Section C-6.4.13 (CQMP annual reports) – this will be assessed also under the process and plans for preparing required reports, cited above.

Offerors are advised to carefully read and understand Sections L and M; some evaluation criteria apply to single or multiple portions of Section C paragraphs. All factors and subfactors that the Government will evaluate must be provided in the offeror's technical written proposal and also must be discussed in the offeror's oral presentation.